



[Home](#) › [Media centre](#) › [Media releases](#) › Slower recovery in casual work continues in 2022

Slower recovery in casual work continues in 2022

Media Release

Released 14/12/2022

i Source: [Characteristics of Employment, Australia, August 2022](#)

There were 2.7 million casual workers in August 2022, back above its pre-pandemic level, according to new data released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Working arrangements

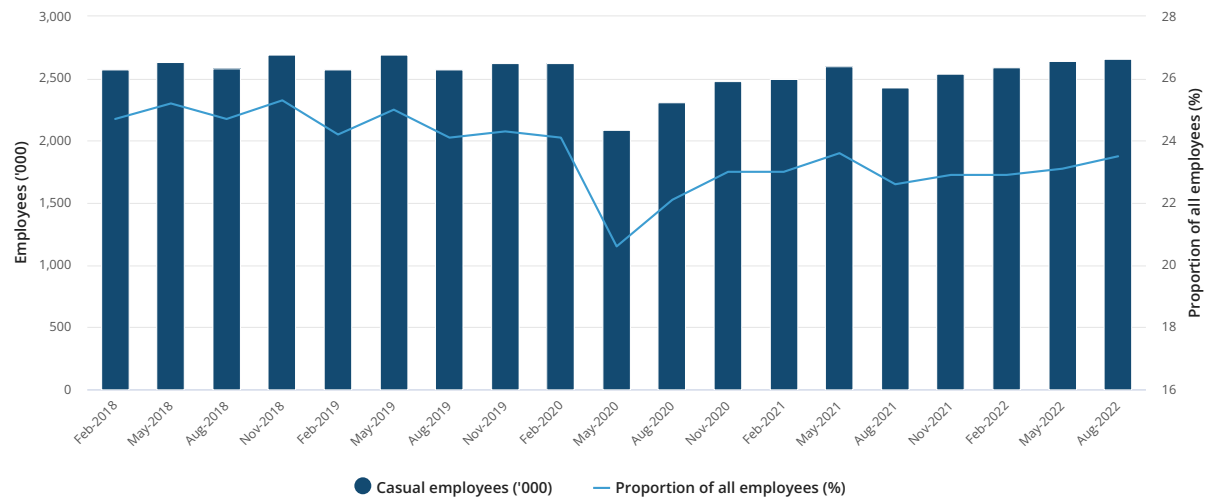
Head of Labour Statistics at the ABS, Bjorn Jarvis, said: "Casual employment was particularly impacted during the first two years of the pandemic, falling by more than half a million workers, down from 2.6 million people to 2.1 million. It wasn't until the middle of 2022 that we saw it return to its pre-pandemic level."

The recovery in casual employment was much slower than for other employee jobs.

"In August 2022, the number of people working as casuals in their main job was around 1.5 per cent higher than February 2020. By comparison, the number of employees with paid leave entitlements had risen by 4.9 per cent," Mr Jarvis said.

"Prior to the COVID period, casuals accounted for around 25 per cent of all employees and this fell to around 21 per cent in May 2020. In August 2022, the share of employees in casual work had risen to 23.5 per cent. This continues to show the slower recovery in some of the hardest hit workforces during the pandemic," Mr Jarvis said.

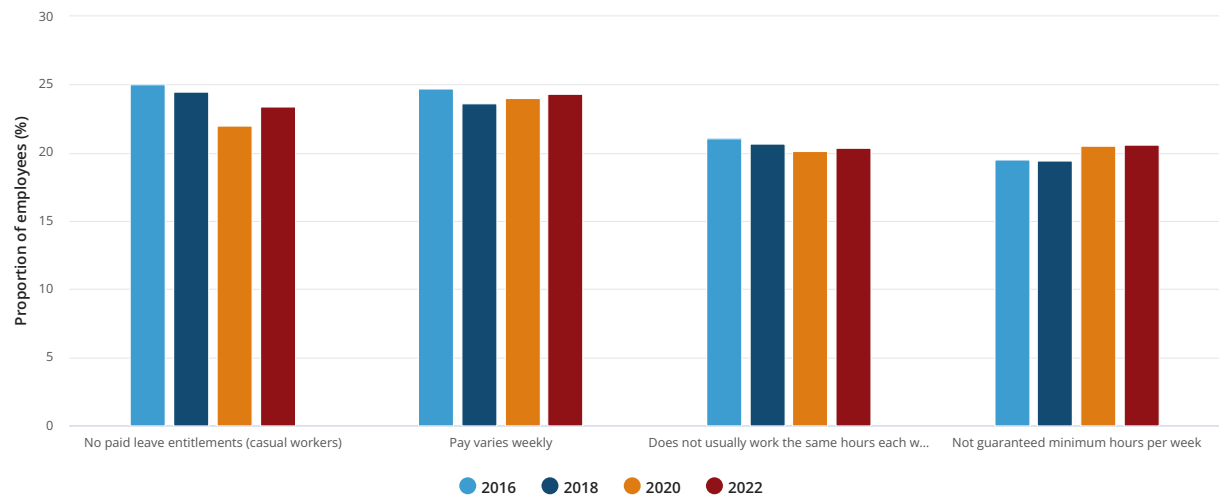
Casual employees



In addition to information on casual employment, the ABS also released information on other aspects of working arrangements.

"Around 24 per cent of employees indicated their pay varies between pay periods and 21 per cent were not guaranteed a minimum number of hours each week," Mr Jarvis said.

Indicators of casual employment



The number of employees working on a fixed-term contract fell by 4.0 per cent between August 2021 and August 2022, from 405,000 to 390,000. This fall meant that fixed-term employees accounted for 3.4 per cent of all employees in 2022, down from 3.8 per cent in 2021.

Over the same period, the number of people working as independent contractors in their main job rose 11.6 per cent, from 1 million to 1.1 million. This equated to 8.3 per cent of all employed people in 2022, up from 7.7 per cent in 2021.

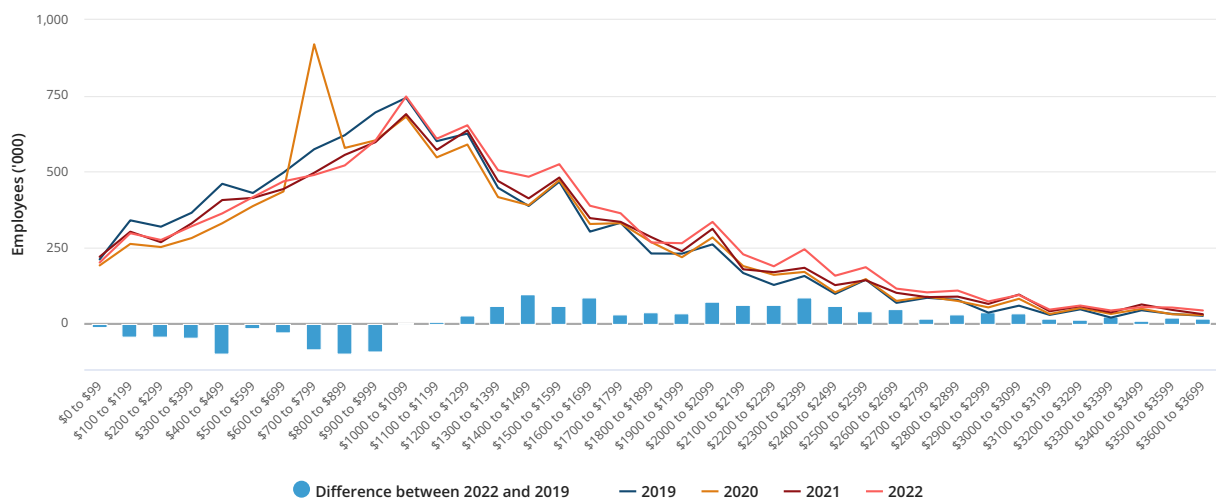
Further details can be found in [Working arrangements \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release).

Employee earnings

In August 2022, half of all employees earned at least \$1250 per week (median weekly earnings in their main job). This was an extra \$50 per week, or 4.2 per cent, compared with August 2021.

"The distributional data in today's release shows how weekly earnings have changed over the pandemic. In particular, the impact to employment and earnings for lower paid workers in 2020 and the progressive recovery through 2021 and 2022."

Weekly earnings distribution in main job, 2019-2022



Note: In August 2020 there was a larger number of people than usual earning around \$750 per week, which was the amount of the JobKeeper wage subsidy.

The number of employees earning less than \$1000 per week in their main job has fallen from 4.5 million to 4.0 million between August 2019 and August 2022.

"For those earning less than \$1000 per week in their main job, 8.9 per cent also had a second job, compared with 4.5 per cent of those earning \$1000 or over," Mr Jarvis said.

In the last year, median full-time earnings for men increased by \$60 to \$1600 per week (3.9 per cent) and increased by \$62 to \$1442 per week for women (4.5 per cent).

Further details can be found in [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release).

Trade union membership

Trade union membership fell by 76,000 to 1.4 million employees between August 2020 and August 2022. The membership rate was 12.5 per cent of all employees in August 2022, compared to 14.3 per cent in 2020 and 19.4 per cent ten years ago.

Further details can be found in [Trade union membership \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/trade-union-membership/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/trade-union-membership/latest-release).

Media notes

- To learn more about our different labour measures, their purpose and how to use them, see our [Guide to labour statistics \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics\)](/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics). It provides summary information on labour market topics including [Earnings \(/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide\)](/statistics/understanding-statistics/guide-labour-statistics/earnings-guide) data.
- Data from the Characteristics of Employment survey can be found in the following pages on the ABS website:
 - [Characteristics of Employment \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/characteristics-employment-australia/latest-release)
 - [Employee earnings \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/employee-earnings/latest-release)
 - [Working arrangements \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/working-arrangements/latest-release)
 - [Trade union membership \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/trade-union-membership/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/trade-union-membership/latest-release)
 - [Labour hire workers \(/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release\)](/statistics/labour/earnings-and-working-conditions/labour-hire-workers/latest-release)
- Employees are the subset of employed people who worked for an employer and received remuneration by wage, salary or otherwise.
- Casual employees used in this release are defined as employees without paid leave entitlements.
- It is important to note that most casual employees can work or expect to work in their jobs for 12 months or longer. Casual employment should therefore not be assumed to be temporary employment.
- Median is a statistical term referring to the middle point of a distribution. In the case of earnings, it refers to the earnings of the person in the middle of the distribution, with the same number of people earning more and less than them. Unlike means or simple averages, medians are not skewed by very high and very low earners.

- Earnings are the pre-tax amount paid to employees for work done or time worked in their main job (including paid leave), and are a subset of employee income.
- When reporting ABS data you must attribute the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or the ABS) as the source.
- For media requests and interviews, contact the ABS Media Team via media@abs.gov.au (<mailto:media@abs.gov.au>) (8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri).
- Subscribe to our [media release notification service](https://www4.abs.gov.au/ausstats/notifications.NSF/Web+Pages/ABS+Email+Notification+Service?OpenDocument&js=enabled) (<https://www4.abs.gov.au/ausstats/notifications.NSF/Web+Pages/ABS+Email+Notification+Service?OpenDocument&js=enabled>) to get notified of ABS media releases or publications upon their release.